

atomic ranch

MIDCENTURY MARVELS

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SPRING 2013



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cover

A wall painted Benjamin Moore 'Bittersweet Chocolate' is a dramatic background for an IKEA Bjursta dining table and discontinued IKEA chairs on a shag area rug; they're lit by a bubble lamp and a south-facing window in this Portland, Ore., ranch. The homeowners remodeled their '80s kitchen with cabinetry, Whirlpool appliances and counters from IKEA, and outfitted the rooms with a mix of the modern furnishing store's wares leavened with some dollops of vintage. Story page 14.



my2cents

The house I grew up in could be called a ranch, largely because it wasn't a bungalow or cottage or some other quasi-identifiable style. It was the first and only home my parents would own, built in the late-'40s in a neighborhood that was once a citrus orchard. The exterior was stucco, with a hip roof and an L-shaped living/dining room, hardwood floors, two decent-size bedrooms and a small bath. The living space was probably all of 1,000 square feet, yet it housed a family of five for 25 years.



April and me, summer 1954: unlocked doors and playing outside until dusk, nary a helicopter parent in sight.

Behind the detached garage, which housed a photo darkroom and my brother during his teenage years, were a clothesline and an incinerator—presumably not in use at the same time. My mother would occasionally make pretty, but bland, jelly from the small peach tree's fruit and there was a potted lime tree; as the caboose of the family, it seemed their gardening ambitions had been tamped down by the time I arrived.

The original kitchen was compact, and in the '60s my dad annexed the service porch when wet bars were all the rage and built-in ironing boards not so much. He constructed a large deck off the dining room and kitchen, a cement patio down a few steps and an aggregate walkway to the front door. A house painter by day, he wrote and photographed how-to articles for *Popular Mechanics*, *Sunset* and other magazines. That meant our home got its share of makeovers: slate was laid over the brick fireplace hearth, and a DIY stained-glass window and built-in bookcase replaced two double-hung windows. In the '70s, rough-sawn bender board went up on several living room walls (a la the kitchen on page 19) and my mother reupholstered their aging modern sofa. I don't remember any concerns about originality and the builder's intent.

When a review copy of Timber Press' *Fruit Trees in Small Spaces* by Colby Eierman arrived, it got me thinking about how familiar today's interest in edible gardening and suburban homesteading feels. Organically grown fruits and vegetables, recycling, chicken coops and composting certainly predate my own green enthusiasms in the '70s. "It's really a throwback to Victory Gardens and the stuff our grandparents did, making stability out of uncertain times, be it the 1940s or now," our daughter pointed out recently. "Today's movement seems to also focus on smaller living, so in many ways a ranch is the perfect setting: they're not built out to the lot lines, so there's a yard, and there's not so much space inside you're wasting a ton of energy keeping it up."

Despite intending to sit more and weed less (my dad's approach) in our Portland house, we've added pears, apples, plums, espaliered cherries and blueberries to our relatively low-maintenance landscape. Hopefully I'll actually practice the *Small Spaces* book approach—pruning is key!—and not end up with an overplanted wild child garden like in the past.

I'm thinking that the 50-year cycle of popularity applies to both historical architecture and our grandparents' lifestyles—before lives were considered to have a 'style.' Perhaps '80s kitchens and Ford Pintos will have their day, too. And I guess it also means that, come 2040, you'll be able to subscribe to *My Marvelous McMansion*. Pity the fools.

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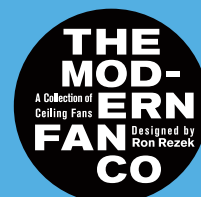
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modernwisdom

We recently discovered your magazine and are so excited about becoming subscribers! Six months ago we purchased a midcentury atomic ranch and are looking forward to finding decorating ideas. In our



home, nothing has been changed or updated since 1958—original everything, and we even bought from the original owners! We think it's a Scholz design but are not sure; still investigating...

Tim and Cheryl Merritt
Princeton, W.V.

✴ I love your magazine to pieces! I have been a subscriber for a few years and bought it off the newsstand prior to that. The only complaint I have is that I would prefer to enjoy your magazine as a digital edition. I use both Kindle and Google books to receive a number of other publications and would love to enjoy yours the same way. Please tell me, do you have plans to do this in the future?

Donna Gravett

We're looking into developing a tablet version of AR; we'll keep readers posted on our FB group, [facebook.com/groups/friendsofarmag](https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofarmag).

—ar editor

✴ Inspired by our pending nomination to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Register, residents of the Northwoods tract in Doraville, Ga., are on a mission to replace all of the entrance signs in the neighborhood. Designed by homeowner Michael Halbert,

each is built with materials that resist fading and deterioration, and residents' donations are funding the effort.

Many homeowners are also renovating their houses, returning them to their original midcentury style, even going so far as to build mailboxes with a more retro

look. Northwoods is one of only three midcentury planned developments surviving in Georgia. The homes were designed by Earnest Mastin and



John Summer, who also went on to be primary architects for the nearby Northcrest neighborhood, previously featured in Atomic Ranch.

Bob Kelley

✴ I picked up your recent issue and love it as much as my '64 home. I will make one note regarding 'Wood Woes' in 'Keep It Up' [Fall 2012]. Never, never, ever use steel wool on wood. You will end up with tiny splinters of metal in your furniture that will rust and destroy the piece. If you have to, use a plastic scuffing pad. You can even use the pad with oil and buff and polish at the same time.

Hope this makes it to your readers, as I would hate to see any vintage furniture ruined.

Howard Suissa

I guess if the grain was raised or it wasn't a finely sanded piece, that might be a problem. In 30 years of DIY refinishing, we've never experienced what Howard warns about, but happy to share his alt technique with our readers.

—ar editor



morewisdom

✱ We live in a 600-square-foot rustic cabin that used to be a granary. It was moved from its previous location on a farm to a lake lot in 1958. I have been fixing it up for my new wife and myself, so I recently remod-



Before



After

eled the kitchen to look midcentury. I kept the original Kelvinator refrigerator (it still works) and bought a Norge stove on Craigslist. It has boomerang Formica countertops and a retro microwave. Enjoy the pics.

Jim Rink & Karen Koenig

Lake Leelanau, Mich.

✱ A few years ago you ran an article about an MCM home in Denver. The person being interviewed said, 'The Cliff May tract in Denver is near condemned; they should be trucked out to California' or something like that. Over the last five years we have worked very hard restoring two Denver Cliff Mays; our most recent house

was just featured on Apartment Therapy.

People with a passion for these houses are moving into the neighborhood and spending a lot of time and money fixing them up. We have a little Facebook group and a website for friends and neighbors to come together and share ideas: harveyparkmodern.com. I was really bummed when I read what that guy said about



our homes. I just wanted to let you know that these houses are special and our neighbors are very proud of our collective accomplishments.

Graeme Nistler

The Fall 2007 'Joe Average Gets Modern' is the Harvey Park article Graeme is referring to, and at the time we visited, the nearby Cliff May tract homes were suffering from lots of deferred maintenance and selling for \$180,000. The condition comment was actually mine, while homeowner Nick Horvath's remark, ("I'd love to buy them all up, put them on a flatbed, haul them to California and sell them for \$550,000.") was really an observation about appreciation for modernist ranches and the disparity in housing markets between the two states.

It's good to hear that appreciative owners are purchasing the May homes. We like to think that Atomic Ranch has had something to do with educating people about the pleasures and potential of this era of housing in the nine years we've been publishing. At the time we shot Nick's house, he referred to it as a 'Likeler'; today it is known to be a Carey Holiday Home and is featured on the Harvey Park website.

—ar editor

even morewisdom

✳ At a time when virtually every aspect of American life has become politicized, it is refreshing to find a magazine that has refrained from doing so. I can't thank you enough! Just another reason I love AR!

Tad Bailey

Timpson, Texas

You're welcome. Go Obama

—ar editor

✳ As you can probably imagine, Arkansas is not exactly rife with beautiful midcentury architecture, so what little we have is truly to be treasured. Conway is home to only two midcentury modern residences; one



is in a state of disrepair, but Reda Salter has renovated this circa 1963 home and operates her realty business out of it. The area is getting busier, with a large super-market going up across the street and, unfortunately, Mrs. Salter has plans to retire in the coming year. It is important to me to spread awareness about this rare piece of Arkansas history, so that it does not become lost in the impending development.

There is a wonderful 56-minute documentary about MCM in Arkansas that can be seen on YouTube, 'Clean Lines, Open Spaces.' I am a real estate photographer and I have made it my project to document Arkansas' remaining MCM architecture. Hopefully, I will be able to get it published one day.

Blair Hollender

Conway, Ark.

✳ I found your mag after staging my house to sell. I had such a good time painting and replacing clutter with



Brownie cameras, Kit-Kat clocks, Admiral radios and Juice-O-Mats. I repainted this Waring Blender (the spelling predates 'blender') my wife's burgundy accent color, and ditched the cord for aesthetic purposes. My (sub)atomic rancher sold in six days.

Looking forward to the next issue. It's very rare to find other weirdos who are into the same things you are.

Shawn Crow

Sykesville, Md.

✳ My custom-built '54 ranch is chock-full of vintage cars, motorcycles, Vespas and bicycles. I've kind of lagged on the furniture and decor, but for me, the vehicles are more fun. The house is just a great place to stuff them.

I have a 1948 Chevrolet Fleetline Aerosedan, a 1961



Ford Falcon station wagon with 38,000 miles, a 1965 Chevrolet C-10 long-bed pickup and a 1967 VW deluxe Microbus. Not pictured are a 1965 Buick Skylark; a 1967 Ford Mustang; '61, '62, and '65

Vespas; two 1947 and two 1948 Whizzers; and 150-plus 1940s through 1960s Schwinn.

I'm the third owner of my ranch, and most of the interior is original down to the two-prong, non-grounded outlets and poodle wallpaper in the bathroom. The first owners lived in it for about 40 years, and I've heard that it was spotless. The second owners nearly destroyed it in their four years, then lost it to foreclosure. It sat empty, scaring would-be buyers until I bought it in 2003. Very solidly built, most of the work has been updating mechanicals and cleaning up the reign of dirt, filth and abuse.

Vince Long

✱ When I saw the vinyl-cushion ottoman in 'My Favorite Space' (No. 34, page 61), my old heart skipped a beat! It reminded me of the square one in my childhood home in Willow Grove, a subdivision of Philly. It made a very satisfactory fort turned on its side.



Here's a photo of my father with our family mastiff, Max, and our MCM furniture. I still have both Danish chairs and would love to know if other readers owned one of these ottomans. I miss mine!

Eantha Haagen
Oakland, Maine

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all over IKEA

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Jim Brown

There once was a time when Oregonians drove three hours north to Seattle to shop at IKEA. There might have been stores in Abu Dhabi and Adelaide, but not in PDX. “When IKEA was opening in Portland, we were all excited,” says Eric Besore, a network administrator. “We even drove past the plot of land when we found out where they were going to build.”

Portland’s excitement was so great that the local news covered eager patrons camping out in anticipation of the doors opening, and traffic helicopters gave commuters workarounds to avoid the congestion. You’d have thought it was the release of a new Apple product or something.

“Coming back from our honeymoon in 2006, we went through Seattle and stopped by IKEA to ask about hiring for the Portland store,” adds his wife, Noelle Gallant. With two decades of retail management experience, she really, really wanted to join the furniture company’s crew. So much so, she stalked their website daily waiting for hiring to go live. It worked, and today she’s an IKEA team leader.



The parquet-patterned living room wall was one of the initial midcentury details that captured the homeowners’ interest. There are three corner fireplaces in all; here, an Admiral portable television sits near the raised Roman-brick hearth with its plug-in faux log. The orange couch is a discontinued IKEA model, as is the coffee table, while the Poäng lounge chair and footstool are still available. Kvartal panel window coverings, IKEA floor lamps and decorative vases and robots are among the edited accessories. The tray ceiling color is Atrium White, which they used throughout.



The couple, both 40, have remodeled and furnished their 1958 traditional ranch in northeast Portland with dozens of IKEA products—from the couches to the teapot to their kitchen cabinets and appliances. And because budget was key, Gallant became adept at ferreting out discounts from various other suppliers while splurging on the occasional

must-have obsession. But first, Besore needed to be hauled onto the ranch bandwagon.

The couple's previous home had sold and they were desperately combing

through the RMLS for a bungalow or farmhouse. "When I saw a ranch online, I'd just go on to the next page," Gallant explains. "But this one—the poster wall and the wood

paneling, specifically—reminded me of my aunts' and uncles' cool ranches. We came to see it and Eric actually loved it."

"I grew up in a sprawling, one-level, sunken-living-room, dark-wood-paneling, thick-shag-carpet, burnt-orange-and-avocado-kitchen '70s ranch—very 'Brady Bunch,' in a bad way," Besore says. "I love bowling, and I love the '50s and 'Mad Men,' and I like the cars, but I never thought about a house [of that era]."

"I liked the look of the front of this house, but I have a hard time seeing past other people's stuff. There was carpet and drapes and lighting fixtures that were bad, and the kitchen was all '80s, but when we came down to the basement it was awesome. We wrote the preservation of the downstairs poster wall into our offer."

That wall he mentions came courtesy of the longtime owner, a teacher who collected travel posters on trips and had permanently mounted them in the basement. The

Noelle & Eric's Tips

Resell cabinetry, appliances, fixtures and lumber on Craigslist; they got \$900 for their old kitchen cabinets.





house was three times as large as their last place, and they liked the floor plan. An IKEA kitchen was already on their wish list, so the existing one with its paneled oak cabinets wasn't a deterrent.

Tearing out carpeting to reveal the hardwoods, painting the nicotine beige interior and removing wallpaper on some of the textured walls were the first tasks. Although modernist friends advised them to paint the natural wood window and door trim, the couple resisted, feeling the contrasting moldings suited the style of home. Gallant developed a palette of Benjamin Moore paint colors after discovering that cheap paint was no bargain at any price.

Their kitchen remodel took about a year, some of that due to hiccups with the floor tile and electrical system. Gallant had just taken a kitchen planning class at work and knew the existing layout made no sense, yet they wanted to avoid moving plumbing to keep costs down. "I had information overload, so I asked some work friends to come and give their input," she recalls. "One suggested moving

IKEA Akrum kitchen cabinets were modified into a bar with a zebra wood top by Dave Dimoff Design; the IKEA barstools are discontinued, but their Glenn style is similar. Three colors of FLOR carpet tiles form a random grid that Besore designed on graph paper when the intended diagonal pattern proved too busy for the room. The wall paint shade is Cloudy Sky—very appropriate for the Northwest.

Opposite: An IKEA Arild series chaise, couch, armchair and ottoman (discontinued in the U.S.) and a custom coffee table made from bowling lane wood, also by Dave Dimoff, form a seating group by the travel poster wall.

Stainless steel sinks are \$200–\$300 on eBay, compared with \$1,000 at local plumbing stores.

The Whirlpool kitchen appliances, including the exhaust fan, are all available exclusively through IKEA, as is the Pental Chroma quartz counter and the Nexus cabinets. Both the floor and the wall behind the cooktop are Pental tile; since the decorative 'Wood Optical' pattern was pricey, the homeowners framed it in affordable matching Tune Wood Field tile. Wall colors in Silver Half Dollar with a Night Horizon accent near the stairs to the basement are other details.

Opposite, bottom: The fireplace screen frame was plated in satin nickel, and the niche that held the original wall oven was retrofitted with an open storage unit. The wastebasket is Simple Human and the planter box divider seen in the background was once located between the living and dining rooms.

Opposite, top: IKEA Abstrakt units hide a TV, store items typically kept in upper kitchen cabinets and work as a buffet area for entertaining. The bender-board wall was probably a '70s update, and the eBay sputnik lamp was plated in satin nickel then assembled by Eric Besore. The rug is from CB2, the table is an IKEA Docksta and the plastic Ayers chairs run less than \$100 apiece online. Pental Bitech tiles form the backsplash on the sink wall.



Tile showroom pricing is about 30% higher than the rate your contractor can get. Make sure your installer is comfortable with the size and type of tile you're considering; in an older home, floors can be uneven and large-format tile could then have high points.





a window over so a 36" refrigerator would fit in the corner, and raising the second window from banquette- to counter-height to allow for a long run of countertop."

"It was divide and conquer: if we paid to put in two new windows, we didn't have to move the appliances and could work with the existing space," Besore says. They compromised on the cabinets: he was drawn to the high-gloss white or gray Abstrakt models for their Tomorrowland/Monsanto-House-of-the-Future vibe, while she wanted wood. "I said I'm going to be cooking in a gray kitchen, looking out a gray window in gray Oregon weather; we need some warmth," Gallant recounts.

They used the basement as the staging area for prepping the quartz countertops and assembling the cabinets, then hired a contractor to level

Noelle Gallant's visual merchandising skills are seen in displays like the one on the IKEA Bjursta sideboard lit by a Basisk floor lamp. Down the hall is a FLOR carpet tile runner leading to three bedrooms and two baths. The wall color is Night Mist, while the front door is Spanish Red.

Opposite, bottom: In the office, the walls are Hearthstone, with a Balboa Mist racing stripe.

High-quality paint, like Benjamin Moore or Sherwin Williams, covers better and lasts longer than budget brands. If you're working with a painter, their contractor's discount may make it almost as affordable as big-box gallons.

Ordering FLOR carpet squares through a local flooring store was more economical due to the free shipping, rather than buying direct online even at sale prices.





If the master bedroom looks like an IKEA showroom, that's because the Malm bed and headboard set, the 2004-era dresser and much of the bedding is from there. The Benjamin Moore paint color is Sherwood Green.

The en-suite master bath had been updated with a marble-look shower surround; the current homeowners added a gray IKEA Godmorgon vanity and Vitviken sink. The colors are Bella Blue and a paint store match of the Crème de Caramel shade from Cloverdale Paint.

Flooring stores often have linoleum remnants perfect for small rooms, and installations that don't require seams can be a DIY option. They used Forbo adhesive and a \$20 weighted roller from The Home Depot.





Join the mailing lists for overstock.com and michaels.com to get 10%–50% discounts; change-of-address kits from the USPS have 10%-off coupons for Lowe's.

The hall bath once had all-pink fixtures, but a replacement toilet was in place when Besore and Gallant moved in. They chose a rectangular vessel sink to raise the height of the vanity surface, but kept the laminate counter and had the original pulls replated. The pink and gray tile seen reflected in the mirror was in reality a plastic faux-tile tub surround; after our shoot, the homeowners decided to keep the pink tub and installed affordable (22 cents per piece) white subway tile with an accent band at the top. The paint colors are Horizon and Ashwood Moss, while the Pfister Skye faucet came from Lowe's.

The guest room has a midcentury dresser from Portland's Hawthorne Vintage and is painted Peacock Feathers blue.





and install the trim panels. Just when the walls were ready to be buttoned up, they got the bad news that their 100-amp service wouldn't suffice for the double ovens and other new appliances they'd chosen. Upgrading to 200 amps meant pulling a new line from the pole and relocating the outside meter—which they'd carefully worked around when selecting the kitchen windows.

Gallant and Besore walked on cement board for a couple of months when their Pental Parc floor tile turned out to be on back-order from China. They postponed the rear portion of the kitchen—with its '70s bender-board wall treatment, white cabinetry hiding the TV and breakfast table—a bit to let their budget recover. Then it was on to smaller projects like selective upgrades in two baths and a full-on entertainment space in the basement.

The exterior was painted a dark charcoal, Besore and

The exterior is painted in Benjamin Moore Black Panther.

his dad built a new patio, and furnishings and decorative touches came together thanks to Gallant's merchandise staging skills. Some are frugal—fabric wrapped on canvas stretchers instead of original art, accessories from discount bins—and some meticulous—having a sputnik fixture plated in satin nickel, tracking down the exact match for the roof shingles from the seller.

Still a work in progress with a list of maybe-next-year projects, their home is a reflection of who they are in 2013. "It's a great entertaining house. I've now become the holiday hostess—my mom has handed it over to me," Gallant says. "All of the kids can hang out downstairs with their media games, and my mom and sisters are upstairs cooking. That's the whole idea of a ranch." ❁

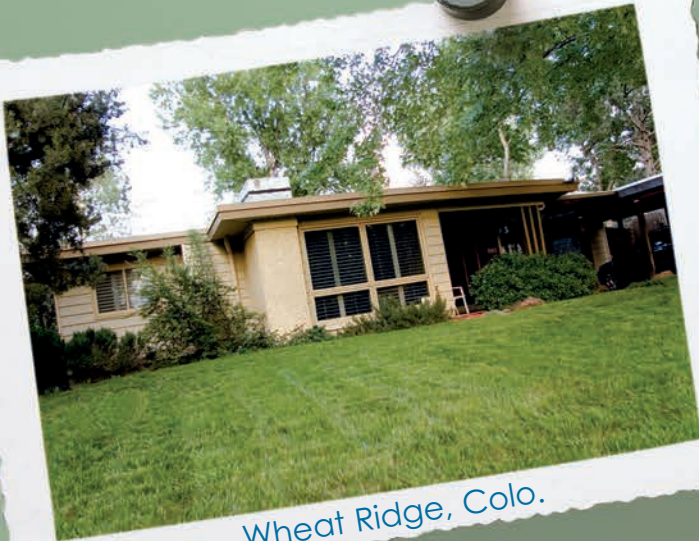
Really do get three quotes for any job and know you'll have to clean up after and proactively watch over the contractors' quality.



Pittsburgh, Pa.



Santa Rosa, Calif.



Wheat Ridge, Colo.





homepage

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Two years ago we purchased our 1957 midcentury ranch in North Hills from the original owner. It desperately needed some TLC, and we have made numerous updates, including a new roof, windows and kitchen, and replacing the tired, painted redwood siding with cedar. The original Sunkist-terracotta brick remains somewhat of an enigma to us, as we have never seen it on another house. We love the original wall of windows in the west-facing living room, which allows the sunset to cast its light into the house. Although the renovations continue, we love our ranch and continue to have fun with its redesign.

Andrea Tiglio & Richard Benjamin

Santa Rosa, Calif.

Our home was built in 1953 and is part of an 88-house, five-street enclave in the North College section of Santa Rosa; a street here is named for the builder, Mr. Meyers. The three-bedroom, two-bath, L-shaped ranch has had two additions under previous owners and now totals 1,968 square feet. An enjoyable project has been taking the house back to the '50s, decorating it in midcentury, including original fabrics for drapes and upholstery purchased through urban burp.com. Several neighbors are still original residents, and pride of ownership of these well-constructed ranches shows. Note our 1963 Rambler graces the driveway in the photo.

Brian Haley & David Bowes

Wheat Ridge, Colo.

We love our 1954 flattop ranch because it stands out in our neighborhood and fits our lifestyle. It had been modified significantly over the years, thanks to its previous owners, an architect and a sculptor. In the back, there is an added four-season room with a skylight and bank of windows looking to the yard, and a detached studio as well. Right now the backyard is 'under construction,' as they say. Our home exhibits some Palm Springs aesthetic, but with more southwest tendencies.

Ernie Nitka & Vicki Ottoson

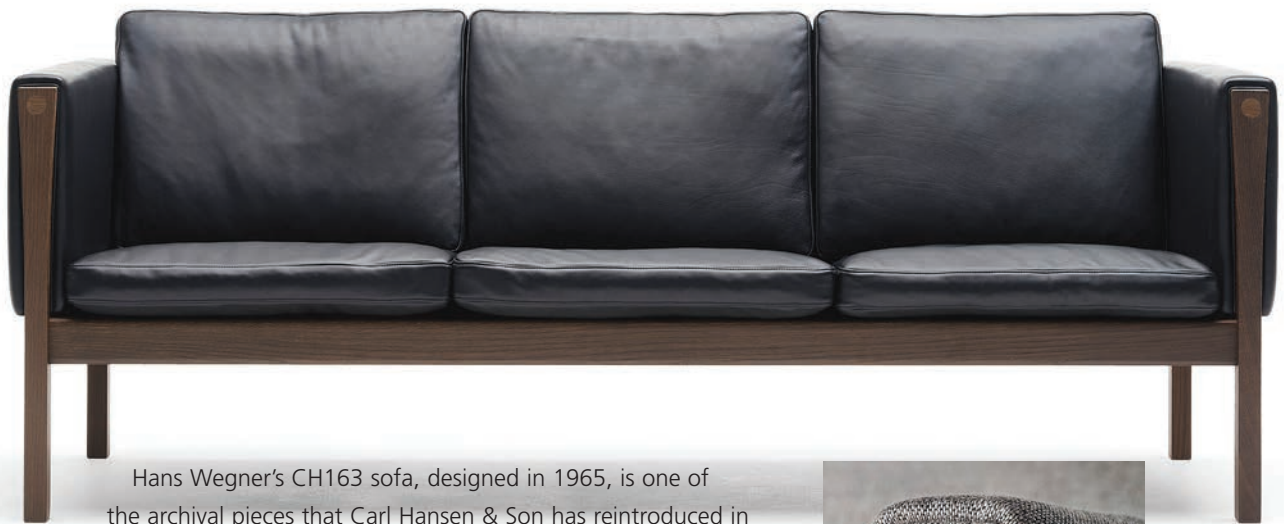
Show us yours; send in a high-resolution photo or sharp snapshot and a couple of sentences about your cool pad for our next issues. See contacts page 7.

cool|stuff

You know how it goes: you need open shelves for your books and midcentury collectibles, and closed storage for that snarl of peripherals and the kids' DVDs. Then there's your home office—wouldn't a compact desk that doesn't scream Big Box be nice? Media darlings BDI suggest their Format office system, seen here in natural walnut and white with satin-finish-nickel steel details and a magnetic panel to hide those wires. Their Semblance modular storage can be ordered in a variety of configurations, including home theater, office or as a room divider. Glass doors that work with your remote, hardwood veneer panels and steel supports: what's not to like? Browse at bdiusa.com.



Finding period-appropriate lighting can be a frustrating task when your budget is more Target than Design Within Reach. Now pour that glass of scotch and sit down to ponder this possibility: The immediately identifiable 'Draper' series floor and desk lamps have that retro appeal, minus the dings and rewiring bills that often accompany vintage electrics. Perfect for your ad agency desk or Manhattan high-rise, in matte black with wood-look metal accents. Priced at \$130 for the floor model and \$100 for the desktop, available from **lampsplus.com**.



Hans Wegner's CH163 sofa, designed in 1965, is one of the archival pieces that Carl Hansen & Son has reintroduced in recent years. Wegner's spare lines are leavened with legs that angle out slightly to form the armrest, and loose foam-and-down cushions make for more comfy sitting. Available in oak, walnut and ash in a variety of finishes, and upholstered in leather or fabric, it also comes in a two-seater CH162 version. Starting at \$5,415, the piece is designed to be reupholstered down the line after the kids have flown the nest: Behind the decorative wood plug on the arm is a screw that makes it easy to dismantle. Dealers at **carlhansen.com**.



atomic**books**

AUTOGRAPHED



Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Interiors

Explore eight fantastic ranch interiors in depth—from warm moderns and split-levels to tract homes and retro traditionals—in our newest book. The homeowners share their experiences with economical finishes and furnishings to adding on a master suite and reworking a tight floor plan. Gringeri-Brown/Brown, hardcover, 200 color photos, 192 pp., \$40

NEW

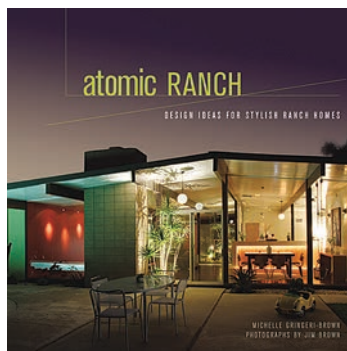
Trailerama

If you like midcentury Americana, this appealing travel trailer book delivers with its vintage ads, illustrations, family snapshots, Hollywood stills, postcards, toys and more on the topic. But you don't have to be a trailer enthusiast to enjoy its picture-book charms, and Phil Noyes' tongue-in-cheek text makes for lite reading. Hardcover, 192 pp., \$30



Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern

If you've wondered what you'd see on a driving tour of Palm Springs, this book delivers. Covering both iconic homes and typical modernist tracts in b&w and color photos, Dolly Faibyshev keeps the text super minimal in her picture book of the desert city today. Hardcover, 112 pp., \$30



AUTOGRAPHED

Atomic Ranch: Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes

Plenty of ranches from our early issues to inspire you: modern kitchens and baths, DIY landscaping and tips on pulling together a retro interior. Resources, history, decorating on a dime—it's got it all. Gringeri-Brown/Brown, hardcover, color and b&w photos, 192 pp., \$40

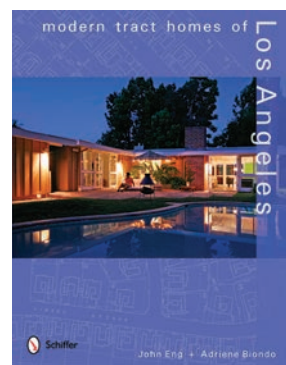
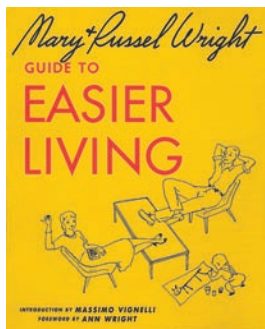
Little Boxes: The Architecture of a Classic Midcentury Suburb

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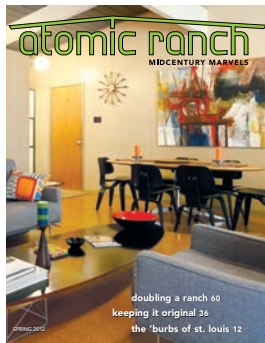
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L.A. photographer Dan Chavkin found his way to modern architecture through collecting midcentury furniture, vintage film posters and period books and magazines. After studying at Art Center College of Design in the early '90s, he shot celebrity portraiture in New York before returning to Los Angeles.

"It wasn't until the summer of 2008 that I discovered the wealth of midcentury modern architecture that exists in the same desert city I had visited numerous times as a child," he says about a trip to Palm Springs. "Inspired by the architecture and its relation to the desert landscape, I shifted my photography [focus]. Currently I am shopping my book, *Desert Modernism in Palm Springs, California* to various publishers."

We were drawn to his black & white images, though his desire to share his color work as well won the day. Enjoy Dan's eye.



just Deserts

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown

photography Dan Chavkin



HERB BURNS 1957

Orbit In

Built as The Village Manor, a modernist motor court whose studio rooms came with kitchenettes, today the Orbit In is a destination motel. “The stacked Arizona flagstone planters, horizontal eyebrow soffits and vertical wood slats on the exterior are all trademarks of Burns’ work. He considered himself an ‘architectural designer’ and was not a licensed architect,” says hotel manager Jade Thomas Nelson. The original kitchenettes still have their built-in Dwyer enameled-metal cabinetry, and the baths their pink sinks and commodes and original 4" DAL ceramic tile. The Orbit In has nine rooms, including the Albert Frey Lounge, with views of the Frey House II.

In Chavkin’s shot, a corrugated metal structure hides the HVAC equipment on the roof, and on the hill behind, Thomas Nelson IDs the homes as the Russell House on the left, with additions by Albert Frey, while the estate behind the rock wall is Hugh Kaptur’s 1957 Burgess House, also with later additions by Frey.



ALBERT FREY 1963
Frey House II

Much has been written about Albert Frey's small second house, opposite, in Palm Springs and the way it embraces its site. It was completed after Frey spent years studying the movement of the sun and the rock formations of the plot before deciding on the siting and design. Walls slide back at two corners to open the main room to the outdoors, which includes a pool built literally over the carport. Left to the Palm Springs Art Museum upon Frey's death in 1998, it is occasionally open to the public during Modernism Week.

"I was drawn to the juxtaposition of materials Albert Frey masterfully envisioned for his second and final home," Chavkin comments. "Against the desert landscape, the asymmetrical metal roofline, glass and curtains create a powerful contrast. I wanted to exploit this idea by completely illuminating the interior, making the exterior appear more iconic and almost lifelike."

WILLIAM F. CODY 1966
Winter Residence

Cody worked for Cliff May as a student and designed numerous other Palm Springs buildings, including the Del Marcos Hotel. "For this all-glass home in the Las Palmas neighborhood, I was most interested in the idea of looking through the interior and having it feel like an illuminated box," Chavkin says.



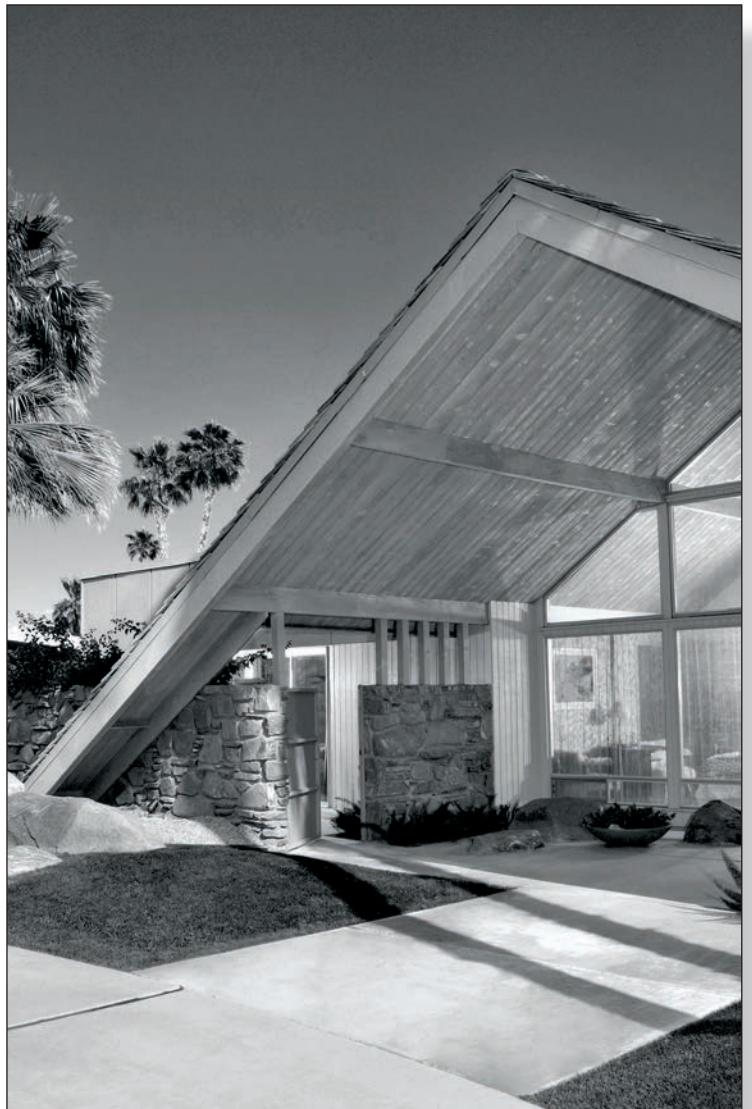




ALEXANDER CONSTRUCTION CO. 1950s
Hoskins Residence & Swiss Miss

George and Robert Alexander were responsible for building the bulk of Palm Springs' modernist architecture. The father-son team worked with Palmer & Krisel on many tracts, as well as with Donald Wexler on the Steel Development houses. They built the distinctive 'Swiss Miss' chalet-style homes in the Mountain View Estates neighborhood, including this one, right.

"This A-frame house is one of only 15 in Palm Springs," comments Chavkin. "And the interior of this Alexander shot in 2011 (opposite) is the same house where we see the homeowners' vintage Mercedes parked in the carport. I think it epitomizes California midcentury modern living, both past and present."







HUGH KAPTUR 1960 **Deepwell Residence**

Still-practicing architect Hugh Kaptur designed commercial buildings in Palm Springs, custom homes for Steve McQueen and William Holden and the Burgess House on page 37. Remodeled in 2010, the 2,300-square-foot house seen above and opposite is in the Deepwell neighborhood.

“I wanted to create the illusion of a house looking like a white glowing box illuminated from within,” Chavkin says. “With a burst of color from the front door, the monotone background of the mountains seems to me to push the house forward and creates an other worldliness.”



EGGERS & WILKMAN 1957 **Davis House**

A much celebrated house by Henry Eggers and Walter Wilkman in Thunderbird Heights was featured in *House Beautiful* back in the day. With original interiors by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, Chavkin’s stark exterior is in contrast with its ornate Moroccan decorative details, including hand-carved walnut screens and marble floors that run from the entry courtyard, through the living space and out to the pool and patio.

ARTHUR ELROD 1962 Elrod House Gazebo

This view of the gazebo only hints at the 4,780 square feet inside, with its two kitchens, four bedrooms with en-suite baths, a sunken bar and chandeliered dining room. The home was interior designer Elrod's own, but he only lived in it until 1964, when he sold to a close friend who kept it in museum-like condition. Elrod's even more famous 8,900-square-foot John Lautner-designed 1968 home was featured in the James Bond film *Diamonds Are Forever*.

"I originally photographed this house for French *Vogue*," Chavkin explains, "but asked if I could return to make more photographs. The house has the very rare and special distinction of having all of its original interior furnishings, [just] as Arthur Elrod designed it in the early '60s."



Browse the architecture archives at psmodcom.org, and see more of Chavkin's work at danchavkin.com. On page 2 is his image of the 1968 Max Palevsky House by Craig Ellwood, who designed three Case Study houses and Art Center College of Design, Chavkin's alma mater.



Enjoy Dolly Faibyshev's photos of the area in *Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern*, available at atomic-ranch.com.

Surrey Downs

Bellevue's Midcentury Modern Community

From the air, the shape of Seattle could be said to resemble an hourglass; a less restrained imagination might call up Mae West or Jayne Mansfield. Impeded by Puget Sound on the west and Lake Washington on the east, residential expansion in the early-20th century was largely limited to either north or south.

But in 1940, floating bridges replaced small ferries connecting Seattle to Mercer Island and to Lake Washington's eastern shore. The breakthrough that this new route provided is hard to imagine today. Seattle's population had grown exponentially over the preceding few decades, and the bridging of Lake Washington afforded families the first easy route to a Sunday afternoon drive to explore Mercer Island and the then-small community of Bellevue.

During the decade of prosperity that followed World War II, an eastward expansion from Seattle soon took shape. Developers began to create new eastside communities of modest, inexpensive modern homes in an effort to attract veterans with families and young couples just starting out.

text Stephen Wilen

photography Fredric J. Ueckert





This stunning unaltered variation of a Surrey Downs three-bedroom home is dwarfed by large Douglas firs and a rhododendron in full bloom.



Omer Mithun's design for the 1968 Surrey Downs Elementary School utilized Douglas fir logs to support its elaborate pinwheel butterfly roof. Downtown Bellevue high-rises are seen in the background.

modern by design

In 1952, Roxbury Homes began to develop an 80-acre residential community on the site of a former fruit and flower farm. 'Surrey Downs' was chosen for the new community name, and the developer turned to the Bellevue architectural firm of Mithun & Nesland to design a community of 52 homes for the first phase of building in 1953. Roxbury Homes needed to keep the development market-competitive, but aspired to avoid the cookie-cutter appearance of other comparable residential communities.

Omer Mithun and Harold Nesland presented two basic plans for Surrey Downs: One for a two-bedroom house, to be priced at \$13,500, and a three-bedroom, which would sell for \$15,500. Each plan was for a fairly compact house utilizing post-and-beam construction. The three-bedroom version was around 1,280 square feet, with a circular layout of rooms. The two-bedroom was somewhat less accommodating to open movement.

Working with just these basic plans, the architecture firm created a varied

streetscape for Surrey Downs by shifting room layouts, alternating carport placement between the side or front of the house, reversing the floor plan, varying the roofline or siting a house at an angle to its neighbor. Privacy was a primary concern, so one of the three-bedroom versions utilized a solid street facade of brick, with clerestory windows on the front and entrance wall providing the only natural light on those two sides. As Sally Woodbridge and Roger Montgomery noted in their 1980 book, *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State*, Surrey Downs displays “some of the best and most representative of postwar small tract housing design. A knowledgeable architectural tourist will immediately recall the work of Anshen & Allen and Jones & Emmons for Joseph Eichler in California.”

nod to the northwest

Generous roof overhangs provided protection from the rain during the dark winter months, and from the sun during the summer. All houses featured a trellis opening through the roof near the entrance that supplied additional sunlight to the interior, as well as affording an ideal garden spot. Homes were set back from the streets, with large, landscaped front yards. The family room portion of the kitchen had floor-to-ceiling windows and a sliding glass door that opened onto a patio, thereby increasing usable square footage during

The split-level entry of this house has been modified with multipaned windows in a tile surround. The remainder appears intact, including the large plate glass living room windows shielded by broad eaves and the beautiful maple.





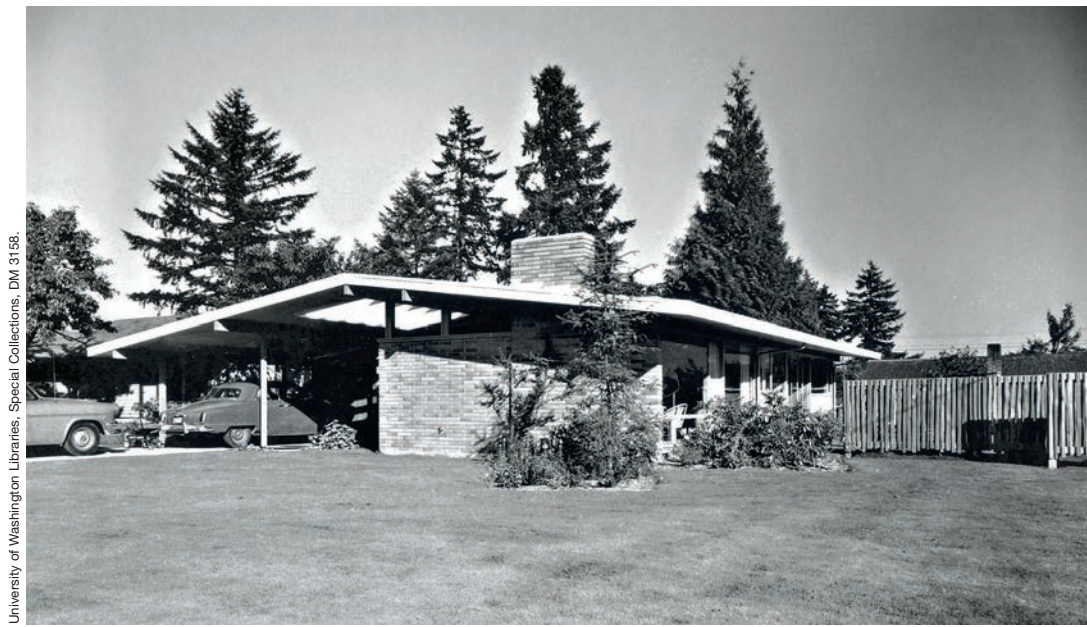
Counterclockwise from opposite bottom: Surrey Downs' original Five Star home appears unchanged from when it was featured in *Better Homes & Gardens*. A 1950s photo of a house that appears to be another Five Star model; note the serendipitous placement of a 1950 Studebaker in the carports of both this house and the author's Walla Walla home (below, right). Almost hidden behind huge rhododendrons is another twin to the three-bedroom *Better Homes & Gardens* design.

months of moderate weather. And native firs were preserved rather than cut down, as they were in many developments.

The primary phase of Surrey Downs was completed in 1955, and that year Mithun & Nesland's design for the Strandberg family residence in Bellevue was selected as the *Seattle Times*/AIA Home of the Year. Three years later, *Better Homes & Gardens* featured a Surrey Downs three-bedroom model as its 'Five Star Home' of the month. For a few dollars, a reader could purchase a complete set of working plans for any Five Star Home and have it built. This particular design was so popular that examples reportedly have been built in every state. My own home in Walla Walla, Wash., was constructed in 1959 from those plans.

Surrey Downs today is a veritable time warp of midcentury modern residential architecture, although now Bellevue's myriad downtown high-rise office buildings are visible behind the towering Douglas firs. Those trees, preserved by Mithun almost 60 years ago, stand 100' or more and provide a buffer that cushions the neighborhood from the din of the city.





University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, DM 3158.



resurgence of interest

While a number of residents appear to be in their retirement years and have likely lived in Surrey Downs for decades, current real estate trends point to young homebuyers' burgeoning awareness of midcentury architecture. Broker Kirsten Robertson of 360° Modern, who sold the Surrey Downs home shown in the sidebar (page 54), knows the area well.

"Surrey Downs is one of the few neighborhoods surrounding downtown Bellevue that went largely untouched by developers during the real estate boom years," she says. "The smaller lot sizes and setbacks made it almost impossible to tear down the old homes and build anything of substantial square footage. But, what is old is now new again and the small, one-story structures appeal to a specific but discerning modern market. Recently, property values have come down from their high in 2006 when the median price for the neighborhood was \$675K, to a 2011 median of \$555,000."

Pride of place is reflected in the pristine condition of the neighborhood's homes and yards. Perhaps most important is that few houses have been substantially altered over the years, preserving their Mithun & Nesland-designed facades six decades after they were built.

During our photo shoot, a spry gentleman in his 90s disclosed how he and his wife had ventured to Surrey Downs in 1955 to look at a 'Seattle Times'-sponsored open house. That trip culminated in their putting down \$500 on the house they still live in over half a century later. ✨

Clockwise from opposite top: This two-bedroom version has minor sensitive updating at the entry, and a tree growing through the classic opening in the roof.

A pristine two-bedroom house with its original Mithun & Nesland exterior nearly 60 years after construction

Although the facade has been updated, the homeowners retained elements of the original design: clerestory windows, protruding beams and the low-rise gable roof.

Stephen Wilen is vice-chair of the City of Walla Walla's Historic Preservation Commission; his home was on the refrigerator in No. 34. Fred Ueckert is a travel, sports, real estate and portrait photographer; see more of his work at FJUPhotography.com.







look inside



Owners who occupied the house for more than 25 years recently sold this Surrey Downs three-bedroom model. They did some minor kitchen cabinet restoration, added new lighting, removed carpeting and refinished the hardwood floors, and spruced up the landscaping—all of which honors the intent of the architects.

“The beauty of the original design was uncovered during this process, and the fact that very little had been done to the home over the years was what made it so desirable,” says Seattle real estate broker Kirsten Robertson of 360° Modern. “The original window package was intact, which was a huge plus, as were the kitchen cabinets and brick fireplace. So many owners convert to vinyl windows, but that changes the entire look of the window package. If homeowners choose to upgrade to double-paned windows on these homes, we always recommend they go with low-profile aluminum rather than vinyl.”

Utilizing the same room layout as the three-bedroom *Better Homes & Gardens* model, perceptible differences in the exteriors of the two houses can be seen in the facade materials, and in the rotation of the low-pitch gable roof, the placement of the house on its lot and the location of the carport. The wall of glass at the end of the living room opposite the front door brings the outdoors inside, and the wood door opens onto a patio for outdoor entertaining. In other three-bedroom versions, the design and location of the fireplace can vary as well.

The ‘L’ portion of the living area was intended as a dining area; however, if the owner did not want to give up space in this room, the area off the kitchen marked ‘family room’ or ‘playroom’ on the plans could be used for formal dining. The wall of glass seen in the living room photo carries through into the kitchen, where sliding doors on the cabinet hung from steel pipes are found on both sides to more easily facilitate setting the table.

—S.W.



homework

Dishwasher Dilemma



One of the biggest challenges of trying to preserve a vintage kitchen is the dilemma of new appliances that just don't look right. Our kitchen was updated sometime in the late-'40s or early-'50s with lovely, cherry-stained birch cabinets and copper hardware and fixtures. We fell in love with it when we first walked through the house. It just seemed to match the vintage character of our 1927 bungalow and had details like rickrack trim that you just don't see anymore.

Overall, the cabinets were in great shape despite some watermarks near the sink and other wear, but they told a story about the life of the house that we felt deserved to be preserved. Unfortunately, the KitchenAid dishwasher had

Our kitchen proudly shows its slings and arrows, including a counter that narrows to accommodate a basement door to the left of the dishwasher.

shed its mortal coil. We looked at having it repaired, but to no surprise, parts were long gone.

Getting Crafty

That's when my wife, Bonni, had the brilliant idea of buying one of those new-fangled dishwashers that come without fronts. IKEA had just the machine, a Whirlpool, and we



thought I could make a panel finished to match the rest of our cabinet fronts. That led to the next idea: Maybe our old KitchenAid could be disassembled and ‘repurposed,’ creating a front for the new machine. Since the dishwasher was headed for the scrap yard, why not tear it apart and see what we could keep?

Luck struck again when we got the old machine out and realized that, like many great old appliances, it was assembled using lots of screws and nuts and bolts, as opposed to the molded plastics (read ‘breakable’) components of modern stuff. Using a screwdriver, the door of the old machine came apart piece-by-piece, which made it easily salvageable.

With the original pieces laid out, the game plan emerged: They could be reattached to a backer panel relatively easily. I cut a $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of Baltic birch ply slightly smaller than the inside dimensions of the vintage chrome trim rings, rounded off the corners with a sander, and routed out two channels to accommodate the trim parts under the control face and at the door seam where the original door hinged down.

Fiddly Dee

The next challenge was mounting the handle. I traced the handle location with the original control face laid out on the birch ply, and chiseled out the wood to accommodate the unique shape of the original latch handle. Fortunately the handle already had a screw hole in it, so with some epoxy and a

wood screw, it attached to the chiseled void in the ply with ease and strength.

From there it was a matter of clipping some small nibs off the chrome trim with tin snips, but nothing major. Once dry-fit together on the ply base exactly as they came off the original machine, the metal parts and original stained $\frac{1}{4}$ " wood panels were attached using flathead wood screws rather than the original machine screws. The new face sandwich measured $\frac{7}{8}$ " thick; I was worried about its weight, but it fell just under the specs allowable on the new Whirlpool machine.

Thankfully, the mounting instructions with the dishwasher were very clear. Six holes drilled into the back of the new face and supplied stainless screws through the backside of the new machine’s door attached the panel. I made a quick adjustment to the door springs (maxing them out to accommodate the weight), hooked up the plumbing, slid it in and secured it. We now had a brand-new dishwasher that looked exactly like the classic old machine, and it matches our great old kitchen! ✿

Matt Souther and Bonni Stover live in Portland, Ore., with their children, Cal and Beatrix, and their dog and two cats. Bonni is the marketing director at MCA Architects, and Matt owns Overkill Design & Creation, a firm specializing in custom design and fabrication of all sorts of stuff—from mechanical shoeboxes to Winnebago conference rooms.

Working Class

text Bromley Davenport

photography Stacey Schultz

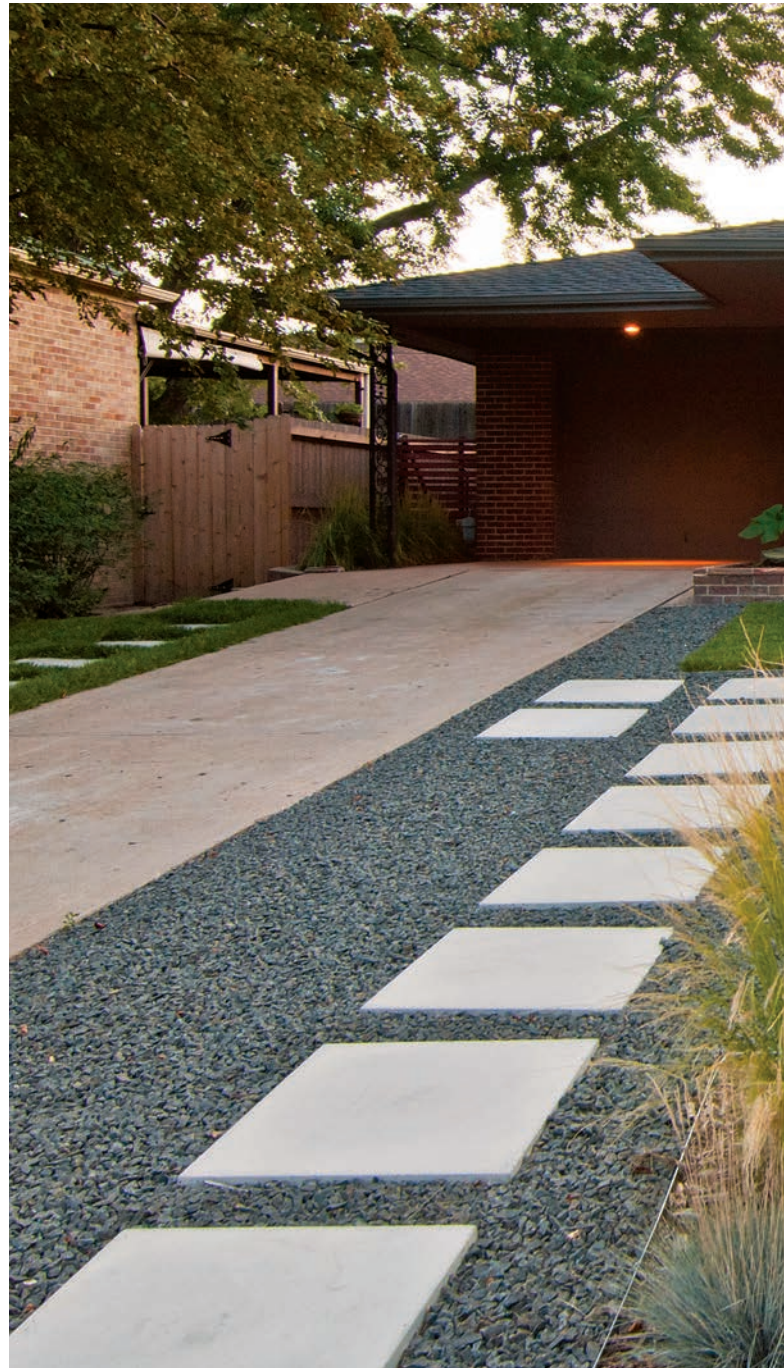
Winston Schultz earned the nickname ‘60 Brick’ during the remodel that added 1,000 feet of living space to his 800-square-foot home. “That was his record for most bricks cleaned in an hour,” says his wife, Stacey. “Beer was involved.”

The Schultzes live in the Sloan’s Lake neighborhood, a Tudor-revival and ranch tract in northwest Denver. They ideally wanted about 1,500 square feet, but soon found that homes with that square footage usually included a basement suitable only for guest quarters or a playroom. The couple don’t have kids and Winston is 6’2”, so not a good fit. The 1951 brick ranch they found in 2006 lent itself to their plan to blow out the back.

Both had done cosmetic renovations before, and Winston is a structural draftsman, while Stacey is a graphic designer. They figured that their temperaments and talents would mesh well and make the plan to reconfigure the kitchen and second bedroom and add on a new living space, master suite and art studio doable. Today, Stacey laughs wildly at the idea they knew what they were taking on.



The unusual use of standard brick on half of the front facade and Roman brick on the other gives the Schultzes’ Denver ranch a split personality. The roofline, windows, garage and driveway remain the same, while new landscaping minimizes water usage. Rectilinear flowerbeds and 24” concrete pavers set in gray stone give it modern curb appeal.



Heroes

Built Like a Brick ...
Ranch House



**We can live here while we do it,
right?**

Winston did all of the structural planning and drawings for the additional footers and triple-thickness microlam LVL beam they'd need to support the open floor plan Stacey developed. The existing hip roof had a complex shape, making it tricky to tie the new roof mass to the old, but the pair, both 42, were fearless and did everything other than major systems work themselves. Sometimes a handyman lent a third pair of hands.

The front facade has both standard and Roman brick that makes the house look a bit like a duplex. The plan was to reclaim the redbrick on the back for use on the newly expanded sidewalls. Once the back section of the roof was off, the brick walls tended to separate from the concrete block structure, so reclaiming them amounted to chiseling off the old mortar times a million.

Did you calculate the number of bricks you had and the linear footage you'd need for the sides, we asked? Peals of laughter from Stacey. "Nooo; we didn't calculate that! And I

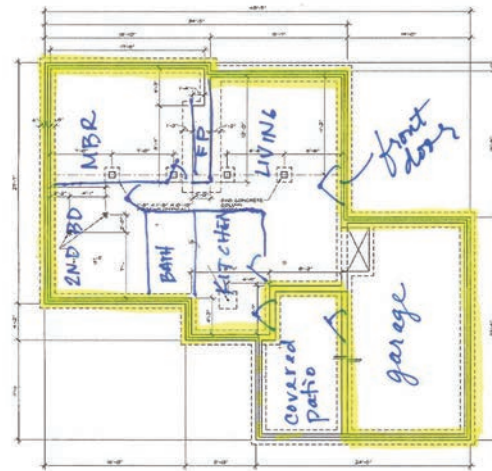


Before



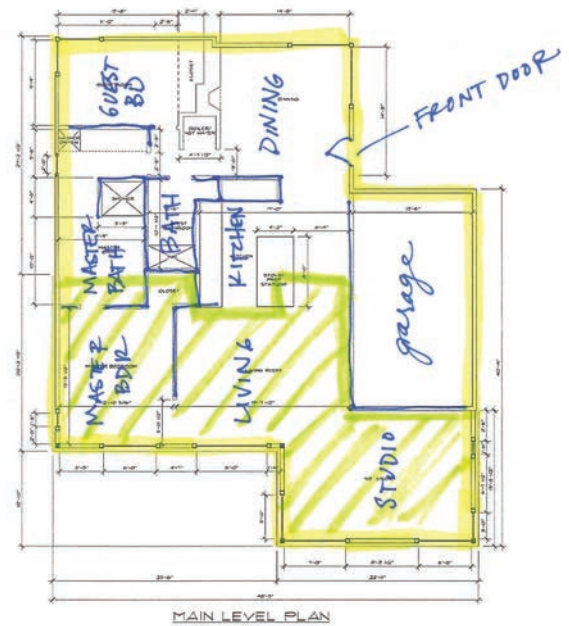
The glass block near the back door in the before shot was repurposed in the master bedroom, and the redbrick was carefully dismantled, cleaned of mortar and reused on the sides of the addition. The couple used Roman brick as a decorative accent on the stucco rear facade—a modernizing and simplifying element—as well as aluminum casement windows stylistically similar to the front originals. A pet door for their two Jack Russell terriers, Spiff and Izze, was built into the design.

During



EXISTING FOUNDATION PLAN
SHEET 1 OF 1

 ADDITION



MAIN LEVEL PLAN
SHEET 2 OF 1



have to say Winston really persevered with the brick: I made it through maybe 20 and said This is bullshit!" They ended up with more redbrick than needed, but had to hunt Denver's two salvage yards for the lighter color Romans they wanted as accents.

Midcentury vs. modern; and the winner is ...

"Winston collects midcentury furniture, and he's a stickler," Stacey says. "But we approached the house differently. If we had bought something like an Eichler, I think we would have gotten into historically correct materials, but we blended our aesthetic—highly modern and minimal—with the existing house. We didn't enter it thinking to make it era-appropriate, but it was really important to maintain the integrity of the house from the curb. We didn't want to put a pop-up on it and stucco the whole thing."

The home's original windows are black metal casements, so the Schultzes wanted to stick with a similar style for the addition. They needed standard sizes to meet the budget, and aluminum would provide structural integrity for the wide spans of the new sliding glass doors in the back. Milgard had models that fit the bill, but because they still planned to

Inexpensive cabinets were paired with Silestone counters, which Stacey feels gives the open kitchen a higher-end appearance. Off camera on the right, a wall of pantry pullouts handles tons of food items, while the black IKEA base cabinet drawers have partitions sized to hold dishes and glasses. The Bosch cooktop has a pop-up Broan Elite downdraft exhaust fan. The modest ceiling height led to the purchase of Tech Lighting's Boxie flush mounts that only project about 2", and the carpet tile is from FLOR. Furnishings in the open plan room include a telescoping slat bench that was in the family, Konstantin Grcic stools around the island, a pair of pseudo-Barcelona chairs and a vintage Eames wire-base table. Decorative elements range from the red Eames elephant, a Prouvé/Perriand Potence wall-mounted light and a Modernica bubble lamp cluster in the living room area.

The former living room is now a dining space with a vintage Saarinen rosewood pedestal table, Bertoia wire chairs and a ceramic bullet planter. The pendant light is from Niche Modern, while the painting on the wall is from Stacey Schultz's Grid series; on the fireplace wall (see page 3) is a Vitra reissue of a Nelson clock and a Design House Stockholm Cord Lamp. The new birch door is a custom design from Crestview Doors, and nearby is a Tablo Tray Table and a Droog Hare mat; window coverings are from The Shade Store.



replace the front single-pane windows, they ordered the new ones in clear anodized. Later, their plans changed.

"We decided not to replace the ones in the front because of their custom sizes," Stacey explains. "The R-value of our brick and concrete masonry unit walls is already poor, so spending thousand of dollars didn't make sense. But we would have done black frames for the back if we knew we weren't going to replace the fronts."

They toyed with bumping the addition's ceilings up a tad from the original 8', but that didn't pencil out. The new wall of windows and sliders compensates for that, they say, and skipping upper cabinets in the open kitchen keeps things airy, too. Bamboo flooring was considered, but the couple couldn't imagine tearing out the original oak, so matching hardwood was chosen for much of the new space as well.

While Stacey claims that, left to her own devices, IKEA would reign throughout, Winston's vintage selections include an Alfons Bach 1937 table used as a nightstand in the new master bedroom. The frosted window's proportions echo those on the front door, as well as the glass block next to the doorway to the bathroom; hanging in the window is a 19th century ceremonial elephant chain. Winston collects Blenko, Carlo Scarpa and Scandinavian glass, which they display on a 1953 Florence Knoll credenza with grass cloth doors. A single bubble lamp, a window panel system from The Shade Store, an original Herbert Bayer painting and, over the bed, another painting by Stacey are other details.

Did anything go wrong? Thanks for asking.

Living with the back of the house open to the elements and a blue tarp instead of a shower enclosure proved challenging, so the Schultzes ended up moving out for three months. There's a story of a 50' tarp acting as a wind sail during a torrential spring rainstorm, but the best anecdote is about their heated floor.

A staple-up radiant system was retrofitted into the crawl space, and to save on costs, the couple did the install themselves. Instead of the tubing being in a poured concrete floor, it goes under the subfloor, with holes drilled in the joists to thread the tubing through. Then silver batt insulation forms a thermal sandwich radiating the heat up. Trouble was, the radiant system supplier advised them to install





Before




The sad single bath was gutted and redone with similar plumbing fixtures and tile as the master bath; the basin faucet is Hansgrohe, while the tub's is original to the house, a Henry Dreyfuss design for Crane. The toilet is a Duravit Starck 3 and the washbasin is a Duravit Vero. Other details are the Salute medicine cabinet, the Componibili rolling storage unit by the sink and a whimsical Lucellino wall sconce by Ingo Maurer that makes a commentary on the vanishing incandescent bulb.

aluminum fins on the tubing to help circulate the air, and regular Pex tubing expands up to a foot per 100' when heated to 180°.

"When we turned on the heat, it sounded like people were down in the basement banging pots and pans," Stacey recalls. The fix was to tear it all out, remove the fins and use Pex-Al-Pex, which doesn't expand when heated. "Luckily, our sense of humor saved the day; Winston came up with 'We do it nice, 'cause we do it twice!'" his wife says fondly.

The couple is pretty pleased with the result of their nine-month project, though Stacey concedes that working with an architect would have been helpful when it came to the lighting. There was some tweaking once they were back in the space, because they found it hard to sit in a store and visualize what a 60-watt light was going to do in a specific room.

Some of the Schultzes' choices are purely personal, like the lack of a door between the living room and their bedroom, and including closets, laundry and a urinal in the master bath. "We recycle our dishwater for the plants, so the waterless urinal was another way to reduce our water use," Stacey says. "I guess some couples want double sinks; my husband wanted a urinal. It's probably one of the biggest hits of the house." 



The couple chose Capco tile for the floor and mod-walls glass tile inside the master bath's stall shower. There is a Duravit sink, vanity and toilet, a Kohler urinal, Hansgrohe fixtures and tall IKEA wardrobes for clothes and other needs. At the far end of the room is more storage and a laundry area.

Appalachia in *Atlanta*





text Turgay Uzer

images Tim Wilkerson Photography

Palladian plantations, Georgian townhouses and 'Stockbroker Tudors'—the city of Margaret Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind* looks to the past for its models of residential architecture. In this tradition-bound city, imagine my surprise to find a mid-century modern gem with a pedigree. Architect-designed and custom-built in the '50s, the home is more California than Deep South, less *Mad Men* and more *A Single Man*. Not only that, it also successfully brings a bit of the Appalachian woods to the center of Atlanta. This one-acre retreat is in LaVista Park, an Atlanta neighborhood that is seeing a lot of remodeling of its conventional ranch homes.

Jerome Drown, a freelance photographer whose clients included the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* newspaper and *Southern Homes* magazine, commissioned the house. Completed in 1956, it consists of a terrace-level granite base supporting a high-ceilinged wooden box on the main level. Add in a cantilevered screened porch, and it's no wonder one architect wags called it a "Frank-Lloyd-Wright-wannabe."

A nature lover, Mr. Drown allowed only plants native to Appalachia on his property, and even preserved a huge tree by building the large screened porch around it. The back yards of the neighboring houses abut on a wild woodland, which acts as a large nature preserve and attracts many birds, ranging from a resident pair of barred owls to pileated woodpeckers and red-tailed hawks.

Above: Seen from the creek, the downstairs houses a darkroom, wine cellar, office, guest suite and mechanicals. All of the exterior doors are orange and the vertical blinds echo the balustrades of the screened porch; note the tree that bisected the porch (page75) is now gone.



In the expansive living room, an upholstered Bertoia Diamond chair and Warren Platner table are modern reissues, while the Scandinavian side tables are vintage. Built-in bookcases provide plenty of display space, and the lighting soffits on the window wall are a repeating motif throughout the house. The Natuzzi couch is from Uzer's previous home, the arc lamp is an Adesso Outreach, while the Sphinx area rug is an Andy Warhol design.

Above: Designer Jeffrey Karl suggested the pops of midcentury orange in the predominately woody color scheme home. The Lazar Oslo chair and ottoman are upholstered in Kravet fabric, and the fireplace metal sculpture is by Steve Cambronne. Down the hall past the dining room and kitchen are two bedrooms and two baths.

Hive mind

For me, this home was a midcentury modern dream come true. While the house itself was structurally sound, the entire inside needed updating—or did it? Once the euphoria of finding the house died down, I was overcome by dread that I might be damaging this gem by remodeling. My style-conscious friends were convened and I posed this question: How far would you go in renovating a treasure like this?

For example, would you go to the extreme of retro appliances in '50s pastels, or use unobtrusive contemporary ones? The council was a big success, and most participants advised gentle and sensitive renovation. The linoleum floor of the kitchen was voted out in favor of Italian terrazzo tile, and

the vintage GE oven and Whirlpool cooktop were also nixed. Realizing that the task was too big for an amateur, I engaged Jeff Karl of Total Concept Interiors to design and implement the project. Jeff's usual line of work is county clubs, and very traditional ones at that; however, he is versatile enough to design in any style.

Our friendship survived despite Jeff's rejection of some of my suggestions as kitsch—like rocket-shaped taps for the bathroom. In the glorious '50s, clean, modernist lines coexisted with incredibly over-the-top kitsch, all of which is period. Jeff reined me in and kept things restrained.

He brought in his own builder, whom I also knew and trusted, to execute the job—and therein lies a tale. Have you seen the 'New Yorker' cartoon in which a contractor addresses a dumbstruck pair of homeowners: "Worst-case scenario? The renovation goes three years and \$2 million over budget, one of you bludgeons me to death with my own hammer and you both get the electric chair." Funny? Not if you've been there! But I digress—let's go back to the beginning of construction.

Twin peaks

The plan was to keep the structure unchanged but improve the appearance of the interior; the house was solid, and other than eccentric wiring, there seemed to be nothing wrong with the basics. The kitchen and master bathroom remodeling would come first and would be the major tasks. Things went rapidly for a few months—the driveway was full of trucks and the site was buzzing with activity. Toward early spring, there was a noticeable falloff: fewer trucks, fewer workers—and finally, even the contractor restricted himself to mere cameo appearances.

Not only that, but the work became shockingly poor: It was as if he had been replaced by his incompetent twin. The new work was in marked contrast with the period built-ins, whose carpentry work was flawless. One day, the rare visits stopped altogether and I was left with a half-finished kitchen where the cabinets were developing blisters because the laminate had been shoddily applied.

Gradually the story trickled down: The contractor had expanded his business too fast in those heady days, and



The original kitchen layout and cabinet boxes were retained, but a button-tufted-vinyl-front peninsula replaced a storage divider between the kitchen and dining room. The homeowner and his designer had new doors and drawers fabricated, and chose Caesarstone counters, a ceramic mosaic backsplash and terrazzo tile on the floor. A period oven and cooktop found new homes in favor of contemporary appliances, and the reproduction ball lamps augment the oversize skylight.

Below: A view of the oak tree that crashed the party.



A modern Agnes & Hoss Roots chandelier lights the Danish modern dining set, and 'Forest Television' by Angelina Nasso hangs over the vintage credenza.



being a craftsman and not a businessman, had gone bankrupt in the middle of our job. The work came to a dead halt for months—enough time for recriminations between those left behind holding the bag.

This painful hiatus was broken by a higher power: One chilly fall day, I came by the property to find a yawning hole where a skylight had once been and the kitchen buried in glass shards. The culprit oak branch was resting innocently in a corner. But there was more: The impact had been so violent that it sent razor-sharp glass missiles flying through the kitchen, shattering windows and scratching surfaces. Later investigation revealed that 250 pounds of thick, plate glass shards had been fired into the kitchen with its brand-new appliances, now-shattered glass cabinet doors and blistered cupboards.

Of course, replacing the skylight was far from straightforward. The huge opening was not standard (nothing is in this house) and it took months to find a new contractor—a forensic one to correct the mistakes of the previous one—and for the skylight to be manufactured from industrial-grade



The spiral staircase, with its metal handrail, is untouched and one of the nicest details of the house. Uzer added an OVO pendant over the stairs and a Meurice chandelier on the ceiling. On the wall opposite the front door, a coat closet was turned into a bar, while open bookshelves to its left had matching doors fabricated. Since it is no longer possible to find old-growth wood of that same thickness, the new doors are much thinner.



Decorative original mahogany built-ins and an oversize skylight in the master bedroom were combined with new windows and commercial broadloom carpet.



A blue corner bathtub was retained in the guest bath, but the master was given a complete makeover with Hansgrohe fixtures, slate cladding in the sunken shower, travertine tile on the floor and an underlit onyx countertop.

plastic. When my insurance paid up, I could then afford to replace the blistering cabinets. And thanks to the Sullivans, the new and excellent contractors (an old-fashioned father-and-son team), I was finally able to move in just as the bottom was dropping out of the housing market.

Digging in

Once in the house, I was gripped by a desire to find out more about the architect. I discovered he was an architecture professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where I teach as well, but not his name. I located the original owner in a retirement community in Gatlinburg, Tenn., but he couldn't even remember having lived in Atlanta. A few weeks later, however, a package of large black-and-white photos documenting the construction of the house arrived. Evidently, Mr. Drown died soon after I contacted him, and his daughter had mailed the prints to me. From these, new (and uncomfortable) details of the construction could be discerned: Work on the house was segregated by race and trade, blacks being relegated to cutting the granite of the terrace level, which was considered menial labor.

During my remodel, the Southeast suffered a severe drought, which was broken in the fall of 2009 by biblical rains; they, in turn, caused huge trees to periodically topple



over, since their roots had been damaged during the drought. Fortunately, all of the ones that fell in my yard missed the house. In fact, a huge elm formed a muscular natural bridge over the creek days after we discussed putting a delicate Japanese structure there.

Despite the tree loss, the temperature still drops by five degrees when you drive onto the lot during sultry Southern summers. And as you watch fireflies from the screened porch and listen to the ever-present birdsong, you feel no need to leave this retreat for the north Georgia mountains. Huge clerestory windows bring the trees into the rooms, and often you can find your way through the house by the moonlight streaming through the skylights. For me, the home remains a special place that I hope to pass on to the next owner, having preserved its original vision of a bit of the Appalachians in Atlanta. ☼

Black & white photos courtesy Jerome Drown estate.

Turgay Uzer is a professor in the physics department at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Atlanta photographer Tim Wilkerson enjoys exploring the world and people through his camera; see more of his work at TimWilkersonPhotography.com.



Construction workers labor to place the heavy granite slabs that make up the front stairs and terrace level, and frame the screened porch to accommodate the mature tree trunk.

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ranchdressing

House parts ...
midcentury collectibles ...
the inside scoop on
what's what
and where to get it

Q: Please tell me about this molded chair, imprinted on the bottom with 'Fibermold Corp. Gardena, California' and 'Borg Warner, Fibermold Corp. Torrance, Ca.' I have four of these chairs, bought in California some time in the '50s, along with a 45" round table with an umbrella hole. They kind of remind



me of Charles and Ray Eames molded chairs, but mine don't look like plastic, they look stronger.

Laura Osborn

A: Laura sent in a copy of a DWR ad showing their modern plastic versions of the Eameses' fiberglass chairs. The 'Fibermold' trademark for fiberglass chairs and tables was filed in 1964 by Borg-Warner Corporation of Chicago and expired in 1985. Unless the '64 date was a trademark renewal, her chairs are at least a decade newer than she thought. I presume Torrance and Gardena were manufacturing locations.

We found Borg-Warner shells sans bases priced at \$65

each in 2010, and a tan-and-white swirled fiberglass chair listed recently for \$52. The thickness of the material and the umbrella hole make her set just right for backyard dining, perhaps with a scalloped-skirt or vintage aluminum umbrella.

Q: My folks owned and operated an interior design store, Vaughan Interiors, in Coos Bay, Ore., for about 30 years. I have retained many Herman Miller, Dux and Hans Wegner pieces for daily use in our 1949 MCM home. One chair has been with us since the early '80s, but does not have any maker's name or labels. It is in perfect condition; I would love to finally know the maker and value.

Mike Vaughan

A: Midcentury bloggers/dealers Valery Lovely and Antonio Aguirre of gonkedglookedandslurped.com



have your ID: "The leather and chrome chair and ottoman were produced by the Pace Collection circa 1970. Here are a few links that we spotted online: liveauctioneers.com/item/5794760, weinbergmodern.com/itemdetails.php?id=622973 and modernauctions.com/January2011.asp."

The Weinberg Modern site lists the price for chair and ottoman at \$4,500, while Palm Beach Modern Auctions shows Pace Collection executive chairs from the same year that they attribute to Mariani for Pace. A couple of threads on Design Addict discuss the company: "The Pace Collection was a high-end contemporary furniture company in business from the 1970s to 2001. The company was founded by Irving and Leon Rosen in New York City. The first showroom was located in mid-Manhattan on East 62nd Street to offer its fine furniture and services to the contract interior design trade."

Q: My house was built in 1960, and has a carport that is walled in on two sides with 16 flat panels. I have learned that they were originally a translucent green fiberglass. Alas, a previous owner painted the panels, so now I want to replace them, in either green or blue. Do you know of a good source for flat translucent panels, either acrylic or fiberglass?

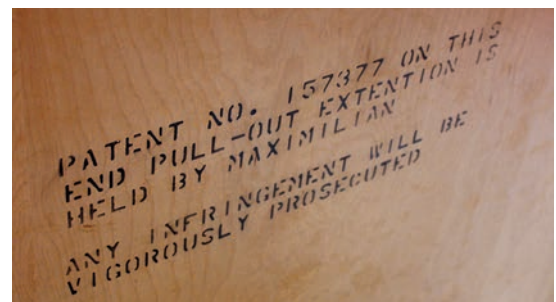
Tom Wittmer

Q: I am replacing a patio cover on my 1960 split-level rancher. The translucent green fiberglass panels over the skylights are rotting and I want to replace them with new (or at least not rotting) green panels. None of my local building supply options (Home Depot, Lowe's, etc.) have translucent green panels, just opaque ones. Any idea where I can find vintage-style corrugated panels?

Chris Guptill

A: *The Home Depot, Lowe's and Ace Hardware all carry various brands of affordable fiberglass or polycarb panels, primarily in clear or white. More premium options include Duo-Gard (duo-gard.com), which has tons of colors and patterns, and Ridout Plastics' (eplastics.com) classic green corrugated fiberglass, which comes with a 20-year warranty.*

Q: I've had no luck asking around and searching the Internet, but I'd love to know something about my table and chairs. The finish is a blond-color veneer and there are two removable extensions. The bottom of the table is stamped 'March 30,1950, Unit no.196, Set no.34, Manufactured by Karp & Hill, a Maximilian original,' as well as the amusingly dire notation shown. The chairs have the original chenille-type upholstery, and the



seat bottoms have springs similar to what your father or grandfather might have had in the backseat of his car. The set is quite the showstopper for visitors, as no one seems to have ever seen anything similar.

Linda Reese

A: *David Call, from amodernline.com found a little*

ranchdressing

more info: "These chairs are very likely original to the table, and their finish appears to match. The only information I could find about Karp & Hill was a Live Auctioneers listing of a desk with the same manufacturer attribution and a plant location of Los Angeles, and a pair of end tables with just that same style/manufacturer." [The brass plaque on the end tables lists the manufacturer as just Karp Furniture Mfg. Co., with no Hill reference on what they say is a '40s design. A classified ad in Reno advertised a Maximilian five-piece '50s dresser set with dollar sign handles (no photo, unfortunately) for \$350.]

"There's not a whole lot out there in cyberspace about this company, and this is the first I've seen or heard of them. Nice lines, but it's hard to tell from the photos what the quality is like." Any readers have a lead on Linda's find?

Q: Two photos are attached—a light fixture and a wall sculpture that both came out of my late parents' home and now hang in our family room. Could you see if anyone knows anything about either of them?

Thanks so much.

John Scullion

A: Bobbie Ann Tilkens-Fisher of *athomemodern.com* replies: "I am fairly certain the light is American, made by Lightolier in the 1960s. I've seen other fixtures by them that have the same chrome socket that appears to puncture the glass orb, though I have not seen this black base. It is a gorgeous (and fragile) fixture, and you should cherish it. How wonderful that it still survives and you get to enjoy a bit of your parents' great taste in lighting.

"As for this lovely piece of Brutalist sculpture, it was most likely produced in the 1960s, too. Brutalism began as an architectural movement in the 1950s and lasted into the '70s. In architecture, it is generally characterized by blocky, severe forms in concrete, and eventually carried over into furniture and sculpture. In sculpture, it is common to see sharp pieces of brass, steel and copper (including nails) hammered and welded together to



create interesting geometric forms. Curtis Jere produced some of the most desirable Brutalist sculpture; in furniture, Paul Evans is a good name to know.

"I'm assuming your piece is not signed, and many from this time were not. It was also common for sculptors to sign their pieces in paint or marker, and with time, those signatures often wear off. From the photo, it looks as if this piece



was made from flat nails welded together. While these sculptures are common, yours is particularly interesting because it has multiple layers and is quite complex."

Need a renovation resource or wondering if that flea market find is anything? Send your questions and photos to editor@atomic-ranch.com and we'll run them past our experts.

atomic events



Department of Water and Power, 1965

April 9–July 21 Los Angeles

Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940–1990

Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A., a continuation of 2012's multi-venue collaboration, focuses on the modern-built environment in Southern California this year. This J. Paul Getty Museum exhibition showcases freeway networks, shopping malls, high-rises, modernist residences and whimsical coffee shops. See additional listings below; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.



Case Study House #21, Pierre König 1959

April 11–July 12 Pomona

Technology and Environment: The Postwar House in Southern California

At the Kellogg University Art Gallery at Cal Poly Pomona is an examination of how innovative construction and lightweight materials influenced modernist architec-

ture. Part of Modern Architecture in L.A.; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.

April 12–June 16 Santa Barbara

Outside In: The Architecture of Smith and Williams

UC Santa Barbara's Modern Architecture in L.A. exhibition covers Whitney Smith's firm and their selling of modern architecture solutions; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.

April 14–August 5 New York

Claes Oldenburg: The 60s

Oldenburg redefined sculpture when his handmade depictions of pastries and other everyday shopkeepers' wares were showcased in 'The Store' in the early '60s. Sculptures and drawings from this series, as well as his ode to the Lower East Side of the late-'50s, 'The Street,' will be on display at The Museum of Modern Art. moma.org

April 17–22 Houston

Houston Modern Market

Vintage and modern furniture, art, lighting and collectibles at the Winter Street Studios, plus a modern architecture tour. houstonmodernmarket.com

April 20–21 Dallas

White Rock Home Tour

Midcentury modern and contemporary homes around White Rock Lake open their doors to tour goers; whiterockhometour.org.

April 20–21 Phoenix

Modernism Expo & Modern Phoenix Home Tour

Part of Modern Phoenix Week, April 14–21, the Expo at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts runs from 11 to 5 on Saturday and includes slideshows, how-to seminars and vendor booths. The Sunday 'Left of Central' home tour will feature 12 modern homes on the



West Side; tickets on sale in February. Go to modernphoenixweek.com and modernphoenix.net.

April 25–28 Santa Monica
Los Angeles Modernism Show

Dolphin Fairs brings 65 vintage dealers together at the Barker Hangar at the Santa Monica Air Center; lamodernism.com.

April 28 through 2017 Washington, D.C.
House & Home

Photography, archival objects and films show the many facets that make up the American home, from building



Maynard L. Parker, The Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., courtesy the National Building Museum

and buying to living in a house. Enjoy iconic scale models, touchable walls of adobe brick and SIP panels and more at the National Building Museum; nbm.org.

May 17–20 NYC
New York 20th Century Art and Design Fair

Dolphin Fairs' NYC20 show brings U.S. and European 1stdibs vendors of furniture, lighting, artwork, jewelry, clothing and accessories to the Tent at Lincoln Center. nyc20.net

May 18 Sacramento
Sacramento Modern Home Tour

A tour of midcentury homes and commercial buildings, as well as vintage transportation displays and other exhibits by Sacramento Modern. Tickets available March 1 at SacMCMHomeTour.blogspot.com.

June 2–September 8 Los Angeles
A. Quincy Jones: Building For Better Living

The Hammer Museum examines A. Quincy Jones' tracts for Eichler, as well as his custom homes in this portion of Modern Architecture in L.A.; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.

June 7–September 14 Los Angeles
Windshield Perspective

The role of car culture in shaping L.A.'s urban landscape—specifically Beverly Boulevard—is the subject of the Architecture and Design Museum's entry in Modern Architecture in L.A.; pacificstandardtimepresents.org.

June 9–September 23 NYC
Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes

MoMA's exhibition on Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) encompasses his work as an architect, interior designer, artist, city planner, writer and photographer. Includes artwork and photographs from his formative foreign journeys, to models of his large-scale projects. moma.org



June 27–30 Lake George, N.Y.
The Luau at the Lake

Vendors, music, a traditional luau, hula dancers, lake cruises, miniature golf, libations and all things tiki at a Polynesian-themed motor lodge; luauatthelake.com.

Through December 31 Sacramento
Ray Eames: A Century of Modern Design

The California Museum is celebrating the early work of hometown girl Ray Eames with an exhibition of family artifacts from her early life in Sacramento and work prior to meeting Charles in 1941. californiamuseum.org

resources

All Over IKEA, pp. 14–24

Kitchen: Cabinets, counters, appliances & accessories, ikea-usa.com * Sink, stores.ebay.com/Kitchen-Sinks-N-Door-Handles * Faucet, Vigo, vigoindustries.com * Floor & backsplash tile, pentalonline.com * Docksta table, ikea-usa.com * Ayers chairs, overstock.com * Tile contractor: Mirek Kukla, sellwoodconstruction.com * Paint: benjaminmoore.com * Sputnik lamp: stores.ebay.com/lamparts * Calypso kitchen & hallway ceiling lamp: ikea-usa.com * Pfister Skye bath faucet: homedepot.com and other sites * Master bath sink & vanity: ikea-usa.com * Vintage dresser: hawthornevintagepdx.com * Custom bar top & coffee table: Dave Dimoff Design, dimoffdesign.com * FLOR carpet tile: flor.com * All other furnishings & lighting: ikea-usa.com

Working Class Heroes, pp. 58–65

Front Door: crestviewdoors.com * Kitchen: Appliances, bosch-home.com/us * broan.com * Cabinets, ikea-usa.com * Silestone counters, homedepot.com * Tech Lighting Boxie fixture, lumens.com * Konstantin Grcic Stool One, various sites * Rug, flor.com * Baths: Plumbing fixtures & vanity, Duravit Starck 3 and Vero lines, duravit.com * Steward urinal, kohler.com * Fixtures, hangrohe-usa.com * Tile, modwalls.com * capcotile.com * Lucellino light, lumens.com * New furnishings: Tablo Tray Table, zmodern.com * Droog Hare mat,

lumens.com * Haero sofa, modernpalette.com * Lighting: Modernica bubble lamps, zmodern.com * Dining pendant, Terra Modern, nichemodern.com * Design House Stockholm Cord Lamp, zmodern.com * Vintage furnishings: zeitgeist.com * Artwork: staceyschultzart.com * Accessories: Kirch Nelson Asterisk clock, zoostores.com * Componibili storage, zmodern.com * Window coverings, theshadestore.com

Appalachia in Atlanta, pp. 68–75

Interior designer: Jeffrey Karl, Total Concept Interiors, tcidesign.com * Contractor: Donny Sullivan, Atlanta, 404.556.6969 * Kitchen: Appliances, mieleusa.com * geappliances.com * vikingrange.com * Counters, Caesarstone 'Honey Onyx,' caesarstoneus.com * Flooring, Bisazza Logos terrazzo, various sites * Lighting (some discontinued): Dining room, Agnes & Hoss Roots chandelier, ylighting.com * Stairwell area, Rico Espinet OVO pendant * Entry, Jonathan Adler Meurice chandelier * Living room arc lamp, Adesso Outreach, various sites * Master bedroom: Lighting, Robert Abbey discontinued David Easton wall sconce * Carpet, Tandus Oasis, tandusshowroom.com * Master bath: Fixtures, Hansgrohe Axor Steel, hangrohe-usa.com * Kitchen & bedroom windows: Jeld-Wen, jeld-wen.com * Living room metal sculpture: stevotomic.com

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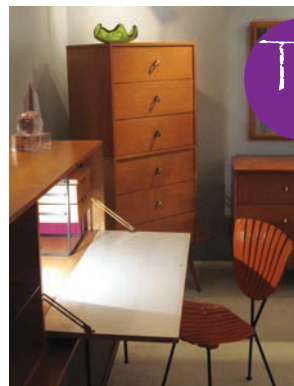
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houstonmodernmarket.com

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orbitin.com

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moonshinesthades.com

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practicalprops.com

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360modern.com

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ASKpalmsprings.com

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cincinnati-modern.com

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ValleyModern.com

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fresnomodern.com

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themaryecompany.com

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PlaygroundoftheStars.biz

Paul Kaplan, Modern Real Estate Group 45
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PaulKaplanGroup.com

Robert Malina, Sente Mortgage 85
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robertmalina.com

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thepurplemoon.com

West Coast Modern 85
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woodwaves.com

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